

VZCZCXRO0304
OO RUEHGH
DE RUEHUL #0490/01 0850805
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 260805Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3780
RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC 8315
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC//DDI/OEA//
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//FPA//
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DB-Z//
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 9407
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5513
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5607
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 0464
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 4097
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 3092
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 6320
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0714
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2086
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1121
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1742

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 SEOUL 000490

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [ECON](#) [KPAO](#) [KS](#) [US](#)
SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; March 26, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo, Segye Ilbo, All TVs
North Korea Positions Taepodong-2 Missile on Launch Pad

JoongAng Ilbo
Ambassador to Japan Kwon Chul-hyeon Allegedly Received Money from
Taekwang Industrial Chairman Park Yeon-cha

Dong-a Ilbo
Current Chief Justice of High Court, Two Former Senior Police
Officials and Two Senior Prosecutors Suspected of Receiving Bribes
from Taekwang Industrial Chairman Park

Hankook Ilbo
Taekwang Industrial Chairman Park
"Prepared Six Money Envelopes" for 2006 Meeting
with Busan Regional Tax Office Officials

Hankyoreh Shinmun
Prosecution Arrests Producer of MBC's "PD Diary" Program over
Reports on "Mad Cow Disease"

Seoul Shinmun
Taekwang Industrial Chairman Park Admits Providing Money
to Three Judges and Prosecutors

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

According to ROK and U.S. authorities, Presidents Lee Myung-bak and
Barack Obama will hold their first summit on April 2 in London on
the sidelines of the Group of 20 meeting. (All)

Chen Bingde, Chief of Staff of China's People's Liberation Army,
visited Seoul yesterday. During an interview shortly before his
visit to Seoul, he said that Seoul's participation in the (U.S.)
missile defense system will trigger a new arms race. (Chosun)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

According to a diplomatic source in Seoul and the U.S. and Japanese media, North Korea has positioned a Taepodong-2 missile on the launch pad at its facility in Musudan-ri in the east of the country. (Chosun, Dong-a, Hankyoreh, Segye, Seoul, all TVs, Pressian)

A diplomatic source in Seoul said yesterday: "A U.S. reconnaissance satellite detected a missile installed on the launch pad at the Musudan-ri launch site. Technically, it'll be possible to launch it in three or four days." (Chosun)

U.S. officials, meanwhile, said: "While two stages of the missile can be seen, the top is covered with a shroud supported by a crane." (Segye)

Chosun Ilbo noted that since North Korea's installation of the projectile on the launch pad has come five days earlier than expected, North Korea might launch what it says is an "experimental communications satellite" this weekend, instead of between April 4 and 8 as it mentioned in its notification. (Chosun)

Chief ROK Delegate to the Six-Party Talks Wi Sung-lac was quoted as saying after a March 24 meeting in Beijing with his Chinese counterpart Wu Dawei: "I told China that the North's neighbors need to act in unison to counter North Korea's expected launch," adding: "But there was a difference in opinion on how far we should go." (JoongAng)

SEOUL 00000490 002 OF 005

Acting State Department Spokesman Robert Wood said during a March 24 regular briefing: "North Korea has assured us that the two American reporters detained in the North would be well-treated pending an investigation." (Dong-a, Hankyoreh, Segye, VoiceofPeople)

The two American detainees, meanwhile, are said to be under investigation for "alleged espionage." Hankyoreh Shinmun viewed this double-faced North Korean move - of giving an assurance about the detainees' safety while investigating them on espionage charges - as designed to urge Washington to hold high-level talks with Pyongyang. (Hankyoreh)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

- North Korea

Citing a diplomatic source in Seoul and the U.S. and Japanese media, most of the ROK media gave front-and inside-page play to a report saying that North Korea has positioned a Taepodong-2 missile on the launch pad at its facility in Musudan-ri in the east of the country.

Conservative Chosun Ilbo quoted a diplomatic source in Seoul as saying yesterday that a U.S. reconnaissance satellite detected a missile installed on the launch pad at the Musudan-ri launch site, adding: "Technically, it'll be possible to launch it in three or four days." Conservative Segye Ilbo, meanwhile, cited U.S. officials as saying: "While two stages of the missile can be seen, the top is covered with a shroud supported by a crane."

Chosun Ilbo noted that the North's installation of the projectile on the launch pad came five days earlier than expected, and speculated that North Korea might launch what it says is an "experimental communications satellite" this weekend, instead of between April 4 and 8 as it mentioned in its notification. Chosun also said that talks would likely pick up speed between the countries in the Six-Party Talks on a response to the North's imminent launch but that it would be difficult to impose sanctions on North Korea at the UN Security Council level, given China's position that has stressed (each country's) right to peaceful space use."

In a related development, right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo quoted chief ROK Delegate to the Six-Party Talks Wi Sung-lac as saying after a

March 24 meeting in Beijing with his Chinese counterpart Wu Dawei: "I told China that the North's neighbors need to act in unison to counter North Korea's expected launch. There was a difference in opinion on how far we should go." JoongAng headlined its story: "Grim Prospects for 'UN Security Council to Impose Sanctions' against North Korea's Missile Launch"

Moderate Hankook Ilbo editorialized: "The Sep. 19 Joint Statement, which spells out the principle and responsibility for North Korea's denuclearization, promises security guarantees to the North in return for dismantling its nuclear programs. It is shamelessly absurd for North Korea to link the Joint Statement with U.N. Security Council sanctions, which might follow its planned launch. It is also deceitful for the North to deny that its genuine aim is to develop and show off its long-distance ballistic missile capabilities. If North Korea does not want sanctions from the international community, it should give up the planned launch. ... It could be self-destructive to threaten other countries in the Six-Party Talks and the international community with the boycott of the Six-Party Talks. If the framework of the Six-Party Talks collapses, it would also not be advantageous for North Korea."

Regarding the two American journalists detained in North Korea, most of the ROK media quoted acting State Department Spokesman Robert Wood as saying during a March 24 regular briefing: "North Korea has assured us that the detainees would be well-treated pending an investigation." The media also reported that the two Americans are under investigation for "alleged espionage."

SEOUL 00000490 003 OF 005

Left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun, in particular, viewed this double-faced North Korean move - of giving an assurance about the detainees' safety while investigating them on espionage charges - as designed to urge Washington to hold high-level talks with Pyongyang.

OPINIONS/EDITORIALS

NORTH KOREA'S SHAMELESS THREAT TO BOYCOTT THE SIX-PARTY TALKS
(Hankook Ilbo, March 26, 2009, Page 35)

North Korea unleashed a threat that it would not participate in the Six-Party Talks if the United Nations Security Council imposes sanctions on the North after the launch of Kwangmyongsong-2 which it is planning to carry out early next month. A North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman released a statement that any hostile act committed in the name of the U.N. Security Council would negate the September 19 Joint Statement. The spokesman added that if the September 19 Joint Statement is breached, there is no meaning to the Six-Party Talks.

The September 19 Joint Statement, which spells out the principle and responsibility for North Korea's denuclearization, promises security guarantees to the North in return for dismantling its nuclear programs. It is shamelessly absurd for North Korea to link the Joint Statement with U.N. Security Council sanctions which might follow its planned launch. The statement by the North Korean Foreign Ministry reiterated that Kwangmyongsong-2 is a satellite. The statement also added that to deny the right to peacefully use outer space runs counter to the spirit of mutual respect and equality in the September 19 Joint Statement.

However, it is deceitful for North Korea to deny that its genuine aim is to develop and show off its long-distance ballistic missile capabilities. North Korea needs to be more frank and wise. If North Korea does not want sanctions from the international community, it should give up the planned launch. Or if it really wants to go ahead with a missile launch, it should accept sanctions. It could be self-destructive to threaten other participating countries in the Six-Party Talks and the international community with the boycott of the Six-Party Talks. If the framework of the Six-Party Talks collapses, it would also not be advantageous for North Korea.

It is natural for the ROKG to closely consult with other nations about their joint countermeasures after North Korea's rocket launch. However, the ROKG should take a cautious approach to sanctions. A stringent response is needed, but it will only be meaningful if it wins agreement from related nations and the international community. Seoul also needs to take note of growing concern in the U.S. over an excessive response. If we punish Pyongyang's deviant behavior only superficially, it is rarely effective. We need to have patience and take long-term measures to fundamentally improve the North's internal structure.

FEATURES

1N. KOREA INSTALLS ROCKET ON LAUNCH PAD
(Chosun Ilbo, March 26, 2009, Front Page)

By Reporter Lim Min-hyuk

North Korea has installed a rocket on the launch pad in Musudan-ri, North Hamgyong Province. The launch is expected in early April.

A South Korean government official on Wednesday said a U.S. reconnaissance satellite on Tuesday detected a missile installed on the launch pad at the launch site in Musudan-ri. "Technically, it'll be possible to launch it in three or four days," he added.

SEOUL 00000490 004 OF 005

Experts had predicted the North would install the projectile on the launch pad this coming weekend at the earliest given the lead time because it had notified international organizations of a plan to launch what it says is an experimental communications satellite between April 4 and 8.

But the official said it seems unlikely that North Korea will change the launch date given expected repercussions from the international community.

It is not confirmed yet whether the missile is of the same type as the Taepodong-2 which it launched in 2006, or whether it is an improved, longer and larger version of the earlier missile. The missile is reportedly a 33 to 35 m-long three-stage rocket. Its maximum range is believed to be 7,000 to 8,000 km.

With the North's missile launch on the horizon, Six-Party countries, such as the ROK, the U.S., and Japan, are expected to accelerate their efforts to discuss countermeasures. Japan will reportedly issue an order to destroy a Taepodong-2 booster in case it falls into Japanese territory or waters. Japan's Asahi Shimbun reported on March 25 that an order to "destroy a ballistic missile" will be issued in accordance with the Self-Defense Forces Law at a National Security Council meeting, which will be held on March 27 under the chairmanship of Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso.

(We have compared the English version on the website with the Korean version and added the last paragraph to make them identical.)

"NK PLEDGES TO TREAT TWO DETAINED US JOURNALISTS WELL"
(Dong-a Ilbo, March 26, 2009, Page 8)

By Washington Correspondent Ha Tae-won

U.S. State Department spokesman Robert Wood said yesterday, "The North has assured us the detainees will be well-treated," commenting on two American journalists detained by North Korea.

In a regular briefing, Wood said, "We have formally requested, through our protecting power in Pyongyang, the Swedish embassy, that the Swedish government be provided with consular access to these two Americans."

The United States, which lacks diplomatic ties with North Korea,

delivers its opinion to the North via the Swedish Embassy in Pyongyang.

Wood described the case as "very sensitive," adding, "We're trying to work this issue diplomatically and the less said from here, the better."

(This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.)

PROSECUTION ARRESTS PRODUCER OF MBC'S "PD DIARY" PROGRAM OVER REPORTS ON "MAD COW DISEASE"
(Hankyoreh Shinmun, March 26, 2009, Front Page)

By Reporters Suk Jin-hwan and Kwon Kwi-soon

The Supreme Prosecutors' Office arrested Producer Lee Choon-keun of MBC's "PD Diary" over reports on mad cow disease and started an investigation into other producers of the program on March 25. As the prosecution has now taken a hard line on this case, concern and criticism about suppressing the freedom of the press is expected to arise once again.

The Supreme Prosecutors' Office obtained an arrest warrant for Producer Lee and arrested him in front of his house in Mapo-gu, Seoul, at around 10:40 p.m. Prior to this, Prosecutor Chung Byung-doo of the Supreme Prosecutors' Office implied on the

SEOUL 00000490 005 OF 005

afternoon of March 25 that he would start an investigation, saying, "Since the producers (of PD Diary) are disobeying summons, the remaining option is to summon them once again and start an investigation." Although the four producers and two writers involved in the report on mad cow disease did not answer their summons, the prosecution obtained an arrest warrant for Producer Lee and arrested him after resuming the investigation into this case. This can be interpreted as evidence of the prosecution's decision to take a hard line approach toward this case.

Reportedly, Producer Kim Bo-seul is on the list of those to be subpoenaed and the police are seeking to take her into custody.

The MBC labor union denounced the prosecution's investigation into "PD Diary" as suppression of the media, vowing to take strong countermeasures. Union leader Lee Gun-haeng said, "We will hold a labor union emergency general meeting on March 26 and stage a protest in front of the Supreme Prosecutor's Office. Union leader Lee said that it is absurd to argue that a program criticizing the government policy damaged the honor of the chief policy-maker and it is evidently suppression of the media.

Jang Hyung-won, the Secretary at the Union Labor's Democratic Broadcasting Practice Committee said, "If the prosecutors attempt to confiscate original manuscripts, or coercively make an arrest within the company building, the labor union and company will unite together to block it."

Previously, then-Senior Prosecutor at the Supreme Prosecutor's Office Lim Su-bin, who was a chief investigator into this case, faced conflicts with the prosecutors' leadership due to his insistence that the accused producers are innocent. Later, he resigned, causing controversy. Last month, the Prosecutors' Office unexpectedly reassigned this case to another section of the Supreme Prosecutor's Office, showing its willingness to conduct a full reinvestigation.

STEPHENS